

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 306548
ORIGIN NODS-00

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INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO 9288

S E C R E T STATE 306548

NODIS

USDEL

FOLLOWING REPEAT JIDDA 8760 SENT ACTION SECSTATE DEC 22.
QUOTE S E C R E T JIDDA 8760

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PLO, SA, XF

SUBJECT: PLO APPROACH TO EMBASSY

1. TODAY ABOUT 11:00 A.M. A FRIEND OF SPECIAL COUNSELOR
ISA SABBAGH CALLED AND ASKED TO COME TO VISIT HIM,
PRESUMABLY TO OFFER BEST WISHES ON HIS SIXTIETH
BIRTHDAY, STATING THAT HE HAD TWO FRIENDS WITH HIM.
WHEN HE ARRIVED, THE FRIENDS WERE KHALED AL HASSAN
AND HANI AL HASSAN, BOTH WELL-KNOWN MEMBERS OF THE
PLO. KHALED RECALLED HAVING MET SABBAGH IN KUWAIT
SOME EIGHT OR NINE YEARS AGO.

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2. AFTER EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES, KHALED WHO WAS
THE CHIEF SPOKESMAN, STATED THAT THEY WERE ANXIOUS
TO ESTABLISH A BETTER COMMUNICATION WITH THE UNITED
STATES. HE STATED SOMEWHAT TO SABBAGH'S SURPRISE
THAT THE PLO HAD IN FACT ACCEPTED 242 WITH CERTAIN
RESERVATIONS BUT STILL HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO
COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH ANY U.S. GOVERNMENT

OFFICIALS.

3. KHALED THEN SAID THAT THERE WAS IN THE PLO A SUBSTANTIAL MAJORITY WHO WERE MODERATES AND WHO WISHED TO COOPERATE WITH THE UNITED STATES BUT WERE FRUSTRATED IN DOING SO BY NOT HAVING A CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION AND BY NOT KNOWING WHAT THE UNITED STATES WANTED THEM TO DO. HE EXPRESSED DISILLUSIONMENT WITH ARAFAT BECAUSE HE RECOGNIZED THAT ARAFAT'S CREDIBILITY HAD BEEN SUBSTANTIALLY DIMINISHED PARTICULARLY IN THE WESTERN WORLD AND THIS DISILLUSIONMENT CAUSED HIM TO SAY THAT A CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED WITHIN 30 DAYS WITH SOME USG ENCOURAGEMENT. HANI AL HASSAN (UNDERSTOOD TO BE NO RELATION) CHARACTERIZED HIMSELF AS BEING EXTREMELY CLOSE TO ARAFAT AND AS BEING THE LAST PERSON TO SEE HIM AT NIGHT AND THE FIRST PERSON TO SEE HIM IN THE MORNING. COMMENT: HIS PRESENCE AND CONTINUING ASSENT SEEMED RATHER STRANGE UNLESS ARAFAT HIMSELF RECOGNIZES THAT HIS DAYS ARE NUMBERED AS A LEADER AND HE IS ATTEMPTING TO HAVE AS HIS SUCCESSORS PEOPLE WITH WHOM HE WOULD STILL HAVE SOME INFLUENCE. END COMMENT.

4. ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 20 WHILE THE AMBASSADOR
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WAS WAITING TO SEE CROWN PRINCE, KHALED AL HASSAN WAS IN THE SAME WAITING ROOM AND ID IN FACT SEE KHALID AND FAHD. HE REPRESENTED TO SABBAGH THAT HE ALSO SAW PRINCES SULTAN AND SAUD, KAMEL ADHAM, AND AHMAD ABD AL-WAHAB.

5. THE PARTIES LEFT AFTER ASKING SABBAGH TO SEE IF THEY COULD TALK TO AMBASSADOR WITH THOUGHT THAT HE COULD PROVIDE DIRECT ACCESS TO PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY, HOPEFULLY BEFORE PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA. ALTHOUGH LEAVING FOR BEIRUT TOMORROW, THEY GAVE SABBAGH TELEPHONE NUMBERS AND SAID THEY WOULD RETURN IMMEDIATELY IF REQUESTED.

6. THEIR SUGGESTION OF POSSIBLE MEETING PLACES INCLUDED JIDDA AND MOROCCO, BOTH OF WHICH THEY FELT WERE SECURE FROM LEAKS.

7. COMMENT AND ANALYSIS: IN OUR VIEW THERE ARE SEVERAL POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR THIS VISIT, THE MOST LOGICAL ONE BEING THAT THIS SECTION OF PLO GROUP RECOGNIZE THAT EVENTS ARE MOVING SO RAPIDLY

THAT THEIR PRESENT LEADERSHIP ROLE MAY BE GREATLY BYPASSED IF SADAT'S INITIATIVE HAS ANY SUCCESS; THAT THEY ARE TRYING TO SALVAGE SOME OF THIS LEADERSHIP ROLE BY ENLISTING SUPPORT OF SAUDIS AND AMERICANS AND BY REPRESENTING TO THEM THAT THEY SPEAK FOR A SUBSTANTIAL MODERATE GROUP WHOSE VIEWS ARE COMPATIBLE WITH SAG AND USG.

8. AS TO SUGGESTION THAT SOME FURTHER CONTACT BE MADE, WE OBVIOUSLY WOULD NOT TAKE ANY INITIATIVE WITHOUT SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS FROM YOU: WE WOULD FURTHER COUNSEL THAT BEFORE ANY FURTHER CONTACT WAS MADE, WE SHOULD APPRISE SAUDIS OF THIS OVERTURE. IN FACT IT IS OUR PRESENT THINKING
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THAT WE SHOULD ON A CONFIDENTIAL BASIS TELL THE SAUDIS OF THIS VISIT SINCE THEY MAY WELL HEAR OF IT ANYHOW AND WE DO NOT WANT THEM TO THINK THAT WE ARE LEAVING THEM OUT OF THE PEACE PROCESS. WE THINK THIS IMPORTANT BECAUSE SAUDIS HAVE BEEN FRANK WITH US AS WELL AS COOPERATIVE IN ATTEMPTING TO INFLUENCE PLO ACTIONS IN WAYS COMPATIBLE WITH OUR JOINT INTERESTS.

9. SEPTTEL FOLLOWS WITH MEMCON.
WEST UNQUOTE VANCE

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